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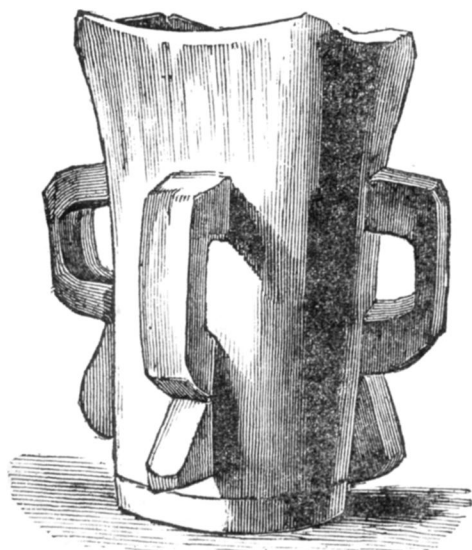
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THE ANCIENT IRISH METHER.

Most of our readers have heard of the ancient Irish drinking cup called the Mether, now entirely disused, or only to be found in the remotest mountain wilds of our country. It is associated in our minds with the simplicity and hospitality of by-gone times; and those who have drank out of it in their youth—if there be any such centa-genarians—as well as those who are yet unacquainted with its form, will, we have no doubt, be alike gratified at seeing it preserved in our little depository of national remains.



The original from which our illustration is taken, was found in a bog in the county of Armagh. It is of the usual form and proportions, round at bottom, but quadrangular at top, and with a handle on each of its four sides. The material is crab tree. Its height is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and its circumference $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches; it holds about three pints. This specimen is, as we have already remarked, the usual size and form of the mether; but it is sometimes found of considerably greater size, and sometimes with only two handles. The use of the four handles appears evidently to have been for the greater convenience of passing the cup round from one to another.

The use of the mether appears to have been universal in Ireland, for it is found in the bogs in all parts of the island; and judging from the great depth at which it is often discovered, its antiquity must be extreme indeed.

P.

SPRING.

FOR THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL.

Fair Spring, if it be thou,
O'er yon misty mountain brow,
In the porch of brightest dawn, dost appear,
With that scarf of every hue,
With that zone of pearly dew,
With thy freshness ever new,
O come here!

From the morning's eastern cave,
Thy gay bowers beyond the wave,
Where Araby's blest sunbeam smiles;
From the fragrant Indian steep,
Stretch thy light vans o'er the deep,
And drive those hours, that weep
O'er the isles.

Call each bright and gentle thing
That comes with thee, O Spring,
To gladden every lawn and glade;
The breeze and shower, the beam
That tinges cloud and stream,
Or plays where blue-bells gleam,
In the shade.

By the fountain's fairy billow,
New silver the sad willow

That droops its mournful braid o'er the pool;
Scatter thyme and tufted reed
O'er the lillied lowland mead,
Where the sedgy streamlets speed,
Clear and cool.

Bring each gem of heavenly hue,
Each child of sun and dew,

Which moor, or mount, or meadow knows;
All the wild flowers sweet that twine
In yon sunny wreath of thine,
The cowslip, eglantine,

And red rose.

Bring the painted wings that hover
On thy banks of honied clover,

And the murmur of busy bees;
And, as thy train advances,
The myriad maze that dances,
Where the arrowy swallow glances
In the breeze.

Bid new life be of thy train,
And young bleatings fill the plain
Till the Shepherd's heart rejoice;
Bid thy thrush call up the grove,
And thy cushat murmur love,
And thy lark in heaven above
Find a voice.

But chief, O soul of flowers,
And heart-enlivening hours,
The muse, and queen of love, wait for thee.
The nurse of hope thou art,
When thy sunbeams touch the heart,
Love and gladness they impart,
And young glee.

Then hither, hither—Spring,
Wave thy fragrant sunny wing
In the breezes of flowery May;
Bring thy passion-haunted maze,
And thy choir of woodland lays,
For thee the world delays,
Come away!

J. UU.

ON A NEW MODE OF SAVING TURF OR PEAT FUEL.

What constitutes the great anxiety of the most anxious of all mortals, an Irish farmer? The saving and bringing home of his turf. And why is he the most anxious of men? Because he is the subject, and too often the victim, of the most uncertain of climates. And why is the saving of his fuel, his most peculiar care? Because the saving and securing of that fuel, is the most precarious of all his changeful employments; and because on the security of that fuel depend the comforts of his house, the conveniences of his homestead, and the thrift of horses, cows, pigs, poultry, and every thing about him. It is therefore altogether necessary for the Irish farmer to provide for his bog work, and in that very season of the year when agriculture requires all his hands; and when the Scotch farmer, or the English farmer, who depend on coals, can look to their turnip husbandry and their weedings, &c. &c. the Irishman is in his bog; there all hands are employed—there he is himself; and let who will want farmer Pat, from the 1st of June to the 1st of August, the answer is, "he is gone to the bog." And yet after all, when he is there, with all his merry men, and women too, he may do little good. He may cut the turf, but he may not save it. A summer so cold and so wet may come on, that after all his footings and clappings, turf may, instead of drying, dissolve under incessant showers of rain; and I have seen frequently in the course of my life, not only the poor labourer, but the strong farmer and the snug gentleman, reduced to the utmost distress for want of sufficient fuel; this may occur, as I have seen it, on the very verge of the bog of Allen; but in the south of Ireland it is on these occasions peculiarly distressing. At all times fuel is difficult to procure in the greater part of the counties of Tipperary, Cork, and Limerick; and the poor in these districts are obliged to go many miles to obtain fuel in the best of seasons; but in such wet summers as I have alluded to, turf becomes almost unattainable, and the poor wretched inmate of a comfortless cabin, has been obliged to depend upon the boiling of his potatoes on the evanescent fire got up by the crackling of thorns; and

what is worse, when he has come home at evening, with his garments thoroughly soaked with wet, he has been obliged to go to bed to attain warmth, and has had to rise in the morning to put on the undried clothes that he had taken off the preceding night.

Would not the person who introduced a better system of saving fuel, be a benefactor to his country? Whether or not I shall be able to do that, I am not so sure, for I know my countrymen are opposed to all that is new fangled, but having seen in a sensible, business-like, Scotch publication, an account of a method introduced with success there, I lay it before Irishmen; and, good countrymen, I beg to assure you that I have been in Scotland, and have seen Scotch bogs, and they are as like ours as two eggs, and I have seen Scotchmen cutting sleive turf, and making hand turf, and the process was exactly like ours, therefore for the life of me I cannot understand why what has succeeded in Scotland, should not do in Ireland. I confess I have often thought that the great bog fields of Ireland might be made, in due time, as useful as the great coal fields of England and Scotland, and the present simple modification of machinery may be but the commencement of mechanical application, which may make the bog of Allen the most valuable property in the kingdom. Perhaps by the last remark I may exhibit my cloven foot as a detected *speculator*; but at all events hear the sensible Scotchman, a Mr. Slight, who in the transactions of the Highland Society, writes as follows:

"It has been shown above, that peat-moss, subjected to a moderate degree of pressure, becomes a fuel which, taken weight for weight, is capable of affording light and heat equal to the best common Scotch coal; and it also appears that the duration is nearly equal. The experiments do not seem to have extended to a comparison with peats dried in the usual way, but there can be no doubt that the superior density of compressed peat, especially when submitted to the composition process, will render it more available than the common peat to all useful purposes. As the expense of preparing by this process appears not to exceed that by the ordinary method, we have a quantity of light and heat, two most essential elements in the comfort of northern climates, at a price not exceeding one-fifth part of that obtained from coal, taking both commodities at first cost; while at the same time an incalculable advantage arises to the home consumer by the saving of time in drying his peats. All persons acquainted with the economy of the peat districts of Scotland, are aware of the inconvenience to which the poorer classes are subjected, by the occurrence of a wet summer, as it prevents the successful preparation of their winter fuel. Peats after being cut, must lie on the moor from one to two months, in the ordinary manner of drying, and in wet seasons even beyond that period, before they are fit for stacking. Even after all this, it sometimes happens that they are carried home in such a state of dampness, as to form a continual source of disappointment throughout the succeeding winter. To obviate this serious evil attendant upon cold and moist climates, let the new process be introduced, and the cottager not only gets free of the risk attending the preparation of his fuel, but he has the advantage of a superior article in his domestic comfort. It is presumed that by adopting a compressing machine, a period from eight to twelve days may be sufficient to produce the degree of dryness required. The introduction of a simple and efficient machine would therefore appear to be of great benefit to the inhabitants of the peat districts, and should the plan be objected to as expensive beyond the means of the poorer class, it may be answered that there is no necessity for each family or householder possessing one. Let the proprietor or tacksman furnish one or more for the use of his tenants or cottars, who might again pay a small equivalent for the use of the machine. As the cottars of one farm or one hamlet usually dig their peats in the same field, a sufficient number could join together to work it to advantage. For such situations the machine must be of the simplest construction, so as to be cheap, and little liable to derangement. The form which Mr. Tod has employed in his experiments, seems to fulfil these conditions. Its simplicity is such that the rudest mechanic may make it and keep it in repair. The first cost must be trifling, being little more than the prime cost of two or three rough planks. Perhaps, under present circumstances, nothing better could be devised for the purpose of local supply.

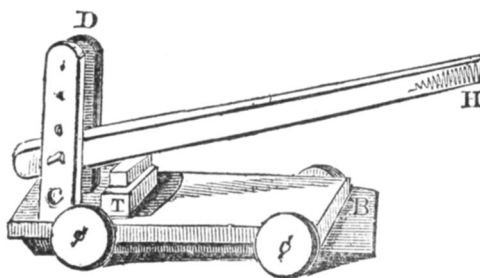
"But the subject may be viewed on a more extended scale. Let us look around us at the extensive fields of peat-moss lying in various portions of our island, and bear in mind that these vegetable deposits are materials in the vast laboratory

of nature, in an incipient stage towards a formation similar to that of our present coal fields. Although we are unable to imitate a process, in which ages are required, yet there is one circumstance in it, which is within our power: we can employ pressure. And though from the limited term of action in all human energies and human agencies, we may not produce perfect coal, yet a substitute may be obtained approaching still nearer to it than the common peat."

The following is the description of the machine.

"In constructing a machine for compressing peat, it seemed necessary that it should possess at least three distinct qualities—that it might be easily moved about, to prevent the peats having to be carried any distance—that it should have considerable power—and that it should produce its full effect with the least loss of time possible.

"To effect these objects, a machine was constructed, consisting of two strong planks of wood fixed together at each end by cross bars, and mounted upon four wheels.



"Two pieces of wood, CD, at the distance of 2 inches from one another, are mortised in the plank AB, at the end A, and at right angles to AB. Between the upright posts CD, there is inserted a strong beam AH, 12 feet long, and secured with an iron bolt passing through the pieces CD, which have numerous holes to admit of raising and depressing the beam AH at pleasure.

"Two boxes were then made, one of wood, and one of sheet iron: the wood-box being about 12 inches long, 4 inches in breadth, and 4 inches deep; the one of sheet-iron 14 inches in length, 3½ broad, and 3½ deep. The boxes had lids which just fitted them, about 3 inches in thickness, to allow them to sink in the boxes by the pressure.

"Each box was alternately filled with peat newly dug, the lid adjusted, and the box placed in the machine at the point T; a man stood at the end H of the beam AH, and as each box was placed in the machine at the point T, he bent his whole strength and weight upon the end of the beam. By this means, an immense pressure was applied to the box by a single effort, and in an instant of time, Two women filled and removed the boxes.

"In this way, a man and three women could compress about eight cart-loads in a day. One man digging, and a woman throwing out the peats, could keep this process in full operation.

"The peats when taken from the machine are built like small stacks of bricks, but so open as to admit a free circulation of air. The stacks put up in this way became perfectly dry, without being moved till they were led home.

"If the machine just described were to be adopted for compressing peat, boxes of cast-iron, full of small holes, would answer the purpose best. For the pressure was so great, that the wood box frequently gave way, though strongly made, and secured with iron at the ends; even the one of strong sheet-iron bent under the pressure."

The writer now goes on to compare a certain quantity of this peat or turf compressed by the machine, with Scotch coal, and he found that the peat, more especially that which is compressed from bog mud, gave out more heat than the coal. He then as follows, speaks of the comparative expense of saving fuel in the old, and that saved by the compression way. And here it is well to bear in mind, that four times the quantity of turf, in the compression way, can be saved on the same space of ground as what is saved in the common way.

"It has been already stated, that two men and four women could compress about eight cart-loads in a day. The wages for men this year at that season was 20d., and for women 10d. per day. But in order to make every reasonable allowance, let each man have 2s., and each woman 1s. per day, which would make each cart-load of compressed peats cost one shilling. Now in this part of the country, where peats

are let by the cart-load, to be dug and dried in the usual manner, the general price is from 1s. to 1s. 3d. per cart load. But a great part of this expense is incurred in drying the peats after they are dug; for, by the common method, the peats are first spread upon the ground, and then put upon their ends in what are called Fittings—then put up in stacks of various dimensions, till they are become perfectly dry, and fit for being led home; and were it not for that additional labour, the peats could be dug and spread upon the ground in the usual manner, at one half of the expense incurred in compressing them.

"But then, it must be remarked, that compressed peats can be rendered perfectly dry, with equal saving of this additional labour, so that upon a fair estimate of the expense of the two methods of converting peat into fuel—that of compression would not much exceed that in common use; so that compression, in converting peat into fuel, will be productive of great advantages to those districts of the country that are dependent upon that substance for fuel." Y.

THE STEEL BOY.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

GRAY.

Walking, one fine day in autumn, through a retired part of the county of —, I saw, at some distance, a verdant hill, crowned by a couple of trees and something like ruins, which tempted me to turn off the road, and take a nearer view.

A genuine old Irish boreen (road), composed, as they usually are, of large stones in a kind of irregular pavement, led from the highway to the foot of the hill, and traversing the green sward to the summit, I found, on a closer approach, that what appeared to be ruins was, in fact, a receptacle for the ruins of human nature, *i. e.* a burial ground; the trees, two noble ash, planted by some sorrowing children of man, to mark the spot of earth that contained the remains of a beloved object.

Somewhat fatigued by a long walk, I sat on an elevated tomb, and, from the lofty situation of the place, commanded an extensive prospect of the surrounding country, which was not remarkable for the picturesque; its features were rather wild and bare, save that on the south-west there was some planting, and the varied hues of the foliage appeared to peculiar advantage in the light of a brilliant sun and cloudless sky.

With such sad mementos as those by which I was surrounded, I naturally fell into a train of serious reflection on the vanity and uncertainty of all sublunary things; and I felt inclined to exclaim, with the poet,

"Dust to dust concludes the noblest song."

While ruminating on "days of langsyne," I was aroused to the recollection of existing circumstances by hearing the funeral cry, harmonized by distance, like the wild notes of the Æolian harp. I can well recollect when I would run any length to avoid hearing the funeral cry, from a foolish dread of it imbibed during childhood, and many years elapsed ere I became reconciled to its wild tones, which, at a distance, are not unharmonious. I cannot say so much when in its immediate vicinity. I turned round, and beheld a long procession ascending the hill. There were, in front, a number of females, in white and very light coloured gowns—the two first carrying what is called a garland, *viz.* a pole, with hoops horizontally fastened to the upper part, covered with curled paper—with the figures of long and short gloves, cut in paper, suspended to it—surmounted by a cross. Following these, were a good many girls, two and two, each bearing a white rod tipped with curled paper. This part of the procession appeared to be regulated by a man on each side, who kept the crowd from mingling with the garland bearers. There was no regularity among those who followed, save that, as is usual in this part of the country, the females take the lead at funerals.

I should have liked to witness the ceremonies of this interment unperceived; but here there was no chance; so I went forth to meet them, and returned among the crowd.

It is melancholy to witness the apathy and levity with which most persons, both high and low, attend the remains of their fellow mortals to the tomb; but among the lower orders, whose habits are free from the restraints of etiquette, this indecency of behaviour (I can give it no milder epithet) is most visible.

I joined a group of men, on one side, who seemed rather surprised at meeting a person of my appearance in such a retired spot; however, it was but momentary; for the conversation was soon resumed by the younger part of them.

"Bad luck t'ye, Barney," said a fine-looking young fellow, with a set of teeth that rivalled the whitest ivory, "but that was a nice trick ye pled on the girls last night; myself was kilt out wid the laughin'."

"I'm the boy to please them," replied Barney, a bold, dissipated-looking young man, with his hat set upon the back of his head. "Fwhisper, boys," and he added something I could not hear, which set them a-laughing.

"Isn't a wondher but ye're ashamed iv sich behaviour," said an old man, "an' does'nt know how soon ye'r own turn 'll come."

"Soon enough to bid the devil the time iv day, fwhen ye meet 'im," retorted Barney, and then, with his companions fell behind.

I suppose it was in reply to the old man's remark that another said, "Och! the Lord fit an' prepare us for that day! amen, achiernah. Arrah, Billy, had ye's a good fair? fwhat way was the pigs?"

The person addressed made a suitable answer, and these sober men entered into a discussion on the probable rise and fall of swine, which disgusted me just as much as the hilarity of the youths, and I passed on to the rear of the females.

Two young girls, who just left the criers, next engaged my attention.

"That's a purty pathern in Peggy Burke's gown," said one. "D'ye know fwhere did she buy it, Biddy?"

"Musha, then, it'd be hard for me, an' it not her own," replied the other.

"O virra! an' as grand as she is," continued the first.

"Aye, faix, shure its fwhat she borret (borrowed) from the cook at the big house," said the other. "An' afther all she got from the gentleman, ye know, sorra dacent faggot she has now, barrin' that red shawl, an' that same's no great things vid the constant washin'."

Two old women came between me and the young ones, talking vehemently. Now, I shall hear some sympathy for the friends of the deceased, thought I.

"Molly, avourneen, the heart widin me is sore," said one, as they pushed before me.

"Och! an' shure its no wondher," returned the other.

"Strugglin' an' slavin' from daylight tal night, in could an' wet," continued the first, "an' afther all to think iv one's armin' goin' sich a way."

"The girls is a great throuble to us any way," said the other.

"Ne'er a word iv lie ye say, Molly; and wid my will, sorra ring ever Barney Doyle 'll put on my little girl's finger," replied the first.

"There worse nor him in the world," said the other; "he's not a bad doin' boy."

"Sugh! bad luck to his breed," cried the first, spitting on the ground. He'll never join any one belonging to me. I'd sooner cry over my little girl on the table, nor a beggarly Doyle id have her."

Young and old, thought I, are the same, each solely occupied in their own concerns. I moved hastily forward, and entered the cemetery among the foremost.

The usual ceremony of going thrice round the site of the ruined edifice was performed, and then the coffin was set down on a tomb-stone, until the grave was dug. During this process, a number of women rushed to different parts of the yard, some to scream, and some to pray at the graves of their relatives. The uproar was really astounding; and, to be as much away from it as possible, I went to the most remote corner, and seated myself, by an old man, on a stone.

"A poor sight, Sir," said he. "God help us, an' look down on the sore hearts this day."

"Death," I replied, "is an awful event; we cannot tell